

Moscow Propaganda Treatment of Jordan and MEFO

Moscow mounted a considerable propaganda barrage (directed mostly to Near Eastern audiences) on the occasion of the meeting of the Baghdad Pact (MEFO) powers in Baghdad on 21 November and culminating with the Soviet note to Iran on 26 November. Moscow's main and consistent line on the Baghdad Pact is that the countries of the Near East are victims of US and British pressure. The consequences of joining the Pact will be economic distress (the fall of the Menderes cabinet is cited as a case in point) and loss of sovereignty. The Pact is alleged to be directed at the Soviet Union and Arab countries, notably Egypt, and is intended to create discord among Arab countries. Along with the usual sympathy for the oppressed peoples, protestations of a desire for friendship and normal relations between the USSR and the concerned countries have been persistently voiced and there have been no attacks on the leadership of these countries (with the clear exception of Iraq).

New impetus was given to propaganda on MEFO with the growing imminence of the possibility of Jordan's acceding to the Pact. In addition to the home audience, a widespread foreign audience is kept informed about Moscow version of the development of negotiations in Jordan, presumably as a backlog for treating the success or failure of Western negotiations with Jordan. The news and commentary are focused around General Templer's visit to Jordan (recognized by Moscow on 11 December). The propaganda line followed adds nothing to that described above, except that Templer is alleged to be pressuring Jordan to join the Pact in exchange for concessions in the Anglo-Jordanian treaty.

Popular demonstrations are alleged to have taken place on 16 December in Jordan in protest against Jordan's intention to join the Pact. They are reported to the home audience, to Europe by TASS in Russian, and in Turkish.

The USSR's concern over the situation in Jordan is reflected in the unusual attention to Jordan during the past week, in which four commentaries are devoted to Jordan (but not all in Arabic), as compared to none exclusively on Jordan in 1955.

That Moscow may initially have expected Jordan's accession to the Pact is indicated by the fact that on 13 December in a home newscast it cited AFP (French Press Agency) as reporting that Jordan had actually joined the Pact, and by the fact that Prime Minister Al-Majali, who formed the new government in Jordan, was described as being in favor of the Pact. No Moscow reaction has been received as of 20 December on Al-Majali's resignation.

The fact that Moscow's news reporting uniformly carries a foreign (usually Arab) dateline or explicitly cites foreign sources, and that commentary also relies on foreign press reports indicates that Moscow propagandists (much less officials) do not take responsibility for views on the Jordan situation, possibly reflecting uncertainty in Moscow official-